

IT: Pennywise Takes Manhattan (9-10 OPEN!) by AaronRulesALot

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Summary: PLEASE VISIT MY FORUM "It: Pennywise Takes Manhattan" TO APPLY YOUR OC TO BE IN MY STORY — This is my own story about "It" a.k.a. "Pennywise the Dancing Clown", who feeds on your fear/flesh. This It story takes place in present-day New York City. They may die, or live...barely. Hopefully Pennywise can be defeated before he does to them.

1. Chapter 1: Tommy and the Quicksand

It: Pennywise Takes Manhattan

Part 1: It's Awakened

Chapter 1: Tommy and the Quicksand

The two Dawson boys, Tommy and Zachary, rustle pass the many trees and ferns of New York City's Central Park, and stop at a small clearing surrounded by slender trees and foliage.

"How far," little, 5-year-old, Zachary asks while following his older brother's footsteps—which come to an abrupt end.

While clearing his throat, Tommy puts his hands on the bush just in front of them both. "Welcome," he begins, "to my...kingdom!"

As if he placed it there himself, he rolls the bush out of the way.

Wonder flushes through Zachary's face. "A lake," he asks in excitement.

"Mhmm," Tommy nods.

"Can we..."

"Yup! We can totally fish in it."

"I've never fished before," Zachary shrieks.

It was one of those October days that never stopped sprinkling rain. That's one of the reasons why Tommy decided to bring his little brother, Zachary, along with him to the lake because not only would he be able to go fishing (fish like to come out in the rain), but his little brother would be spending the day with him and not at daycare where he'd have to pick him up late at night; around 8pm.

For what happened the past week really affected Tommy's feelings of walking alone at night. No one would believe him, that is if anyone would want to hear him talk—he has no friends and his parents are always so busy with work that they are basically non-existent to him. Matter of fact, the last time he saw them was when he stayed up late using his computer, when they came home at around 12pm. And

having no friends was no problem to Tommy, either; he just doesn't feel the need for them. Sure he would be less lonely, but he likes his life right now. If people wanted to be his friend, he wouldn't mind, if not, then he doesn't mind.

Friends or not, he keeps himself company, whether it's being busy with school, or hanging-out at the park, or, most importantly, photographing.

Well...all *was* fine, except for the sightings of..."It". That's what Tommy would best describe it, for no other word would fit its meaning.

The strange sightings began on Tuesday and will hopefully end today (Friday) only because he will not be walking along the dark streets of New York to pick up Zachary from the daycare that resides 2 blocks away from his apartment building. Would this strange sighting follow him to this lake? That is not yet determined. Luckily, nothing unusual has happened...yet. No creepy shadow creature that he has been seeing the past week to induce fear on him as he does something as innocent as fishing with his younger brother.

This "creature" could only be described as a tall humanoid with long arms that touch the floor, dragging along the pavement. Yes, pavement. For Tommy witnesses "It" when it's across the street on the other side of the sidewalk where a pole of orange, blinking, light shines the ground of the pavement and road.

What's incredibly unsettling, now that Tommy realizes, is that he is not even sure if he was seeing what he was seeing...if that makes any sense. It could have honestly been shadows or his mind playing tricks on him. It could have very well been anything; a dumpster, a pole...anything! Moreover, the thing did not move once, so it must *not* have been "alive"...right? The fact that he could not even decide whether it was living or not truly terrorized him. How does that make sense? Unable to tell if something is alive?

Tommy was completely certain of one thing, though. This...thing...had long limbs that touched the ground. And when these limbs were clear from the moonlight, or the streetlights, he could see that they even dragged on the floor because they were still

much longer. Furthermore, and this could just be the orange streetlights, the thing's flesh—if you would call it that—was colored orange. And that's disregarding the debate whether it was alive or not.

However, the walks back from the daycare with Zachary were nothing like that. "It" was not there to greet him, adding to his theory that it was all in his mind, or the shadows. Sometimes he thought he saw It within the dark alleys of the buildings...

Luckily, those creepy thoughts had vanished thanks to Zachary's background giggles, which pulled Tommy out of his day-dream and into the real-world.

"You have another bite!" Zachary shrieked.
"Sweet!" Tommy smiled back.

Without realizing, Tommy had caught 3 fish in only 10 minutes.

"Zachary, look at this one!"

But Zachary was too busy playing in the fallen leaves of the Autumn trees. He grabbed as many as he could in both hands and joyfully laughed while throwing them in the air. "Timmy, look!" Zachary yelled while jumping into a pile.

This specifically put a big smile on Tommy's face. Everyone, including himself, found it cute when Zachary called him Timmy instead of Tommy. It was their little cutesy thing.

The next hour was of Tommy teaching Zachary how to fish, something he self-taught himself just a few months ago. Although he didn't do the activity often, he was good at it.

The activity he was good at was photography. Matter of fact, he carried a camera everywhere he went. Even now, he's been taking pictures of Zachary playing with the leaves and water of the lake for the past hour. He enjoyed this particular picture of Zachary smiling at the camera while holding a large fish in both hands.

"Say cheese" would be considered Tommy's catchphrase.

Many times while walking along the crowded streets of Manhattan, he'd stop and take a quick snapshot of two strangers doing something; whether it being romantic or silly.

"Yo! Can you climb that pretzel statue and pretend to bite it. Why? Cuz it's for my school project. Thanks!"

"Excuse me, sorry for interrupting your guys' first kiss, but can you do it again for my camera?"

Tommy puts down the camera and continues to fish while Zachary continues to play and make background noise, which Tommy did not mind whatsoever; it kept him company, and was cute.

The sky now turned from a light blue to the colors of fall itself; red, yellow, orange. Sunset had arrived.

"I think it's time for bed."

"I know, Zach. Let me just catch this one last fish," Tommy begged while a big tug on the rod pulled him into the water. *Good thing I took off my shoes and socks*, he thought.

As the fight with the monster-fish grew, Tommy's attention towards his brother had vanished. "Hurry, Timmy! I have to pee!"

"Hold up," Tommy replied with a small twist of his head to Zachary's direction to show acknowledgment of where he was standing.

As the night and fight grew, Tommy's anger of this fish increased.

"Ugh! How big are you? I'm not even gonna eat you, dude. I just wanna hold you!" He yelled to no one but the fish.

"Timmy!"

"Almost done, I swear!"

But something else had caught Zachary's attention now. It was of a sly giggle heard from the woods, which were pitch-black now.

He paused to understand if he really heard what he heard. Then another giggle came to clarify...followed by a deep, yet child-like, voice saying "Hiya, Zachy!"

From Zachary's position, he could only see the large, dark, bushes in front of him and the increasing amounts of leaves dropping to the floor based on the high winds now arriving.

A breeze flew out of the dark woods towards Zachary, bringing the

smell of ice-cream and popcorn to his nostrils. He couldn't help but lick his lips and smile.

"Want a balloon?" The same anonymous voice said within the darkness. In response, Zachary looked behind him to see Tommy still wrestling with the fish, creating many loud splashing noises of the water. "Fuck you fish," was the level Tommy was at with this catch. And with that said, Zachary felt it safe enough to sneak off towards this mystery voice and its claim of a balloon.

It came to the point where Tommy knew that he might have to get much deeper into the lake. He was about to take off his t-shirt, when his fishing-rod had been swept into the water. *Welp*, he thought.

He lifted his legs out of the muddy ground and began to paddle his way to the shore, where his shoes, socks, and, most importantly, camera laid.

"Zach, it's time to go," he called out while slipping on his socks and shoes.

While wrapping the camera strap around his neck, he called out once more "Zach."

He began to worry when his brother was nowhere in sight. "Zach..." he shouted in a worrisome voice. It was quiet for a few seconds, only the sounds of the strong wind and crickets chirping had filled his ears. Finally, a response was given. Well...only a scream of his younger brother saying "Timmy!"

His heart immediately rushed. "Zach!" He yelled while running in the direction of his scream, which lead into the dark forest. He hit his head on many low branches, and the bushes had scratched his legs all over, but he continued to push forward to the direction of the scream, all the while screaming "Zach!"

The wind clogged his ears as he ran, and the camera, which was strapped around his neck, continuously banged on his chest after every leg movement made.

Then he arrived in a large clearing of the woods, where the ground

was a mixture of dying grass, leaves, twigs, and dirt. Mud, even. It wasn't even raining, but there was lots of mud. The surrounding trees of the clearing were thick and, apart from the season, were covered in many green leaves.

Just ahead of Tommy was his brother...who was, for some odd reason, frozen still; not making any movement. From what he could see, the wind was blowing his tears across his face.

"Help me!" Tommy heard Zachary whimper through the roaring wind.

As Tommy slowly walked closer to him, he saw why he did not move a muscle. For Zachary was stuck in a medium-sized puddle of quicksand.

"Oh shit," was Tommy's immediate response, followed by "Zachary grab my hand!"

"I can't!" Zachary cried.

"What do you mean you can't?!" Tommy asked in sheer confusion and frustration.

Zachary paused to swipe his hair out of his eyes (the wind was growing stronger). "Cus something's in here with me!"

Tommy disregarded what he had said and tucked his hands under Zachary's armpits. He was about to pull him out when a deep voice in front of him had said "**I wouldn't do that.**"

Immediately, Tommy retracted his arms in fear and looked up. There was no one...or at least no one he saw. He checked behind himself, not expecting to see anyone since the voice had come from in front of him.

"Zachary...umm...did you hear that too?" He asked for reassurance.

"Yes," he replied joyfully. "That's the clown that was gonna give me a balloon."

Tommy was puzzled with his response. Literally any other response would have been fine. Even "No, you must be losing your mind if you heard someone say that in the middle of the forest" would have been better.

With raised eyebrows and shell-shocked eyes, Tommy asked with sternness "What clown?"

But before Zachary responded, Tommy was given the feeling of being watched. Therefore, he gazed toward the forest once more. Being that it was night, he squinted to make out figures and outlines of objects. His eyes swooped past the forest to see: trees, leaves, bushes, ferns.

Then he saw it. "It"! It was just a few trees ahead in the forest in the same direction the voice had came. It stood standing behind the tall slender trees many yards away from him. Even now, he couldn't decide if it was alive or not. He began to think about its long arms. Then he stopped, telling himself that it can't be alive; therefore, does not—no, cannot—have arms.

He looked back down at Zachary, trying to block It out of his mind, and with haste says "Alright, Zachary. I'm gonna pull you out, then we're both gonna run home fast. Can you run, or do you want me to carry you?"

"I wouldn't do that," the deep voice had spoke again.

"Who's saying that?!" Tommy snapped. "What the fuck do you want?!"

"Don't act like you don't know who," the voice replied with a giggle.

Terrified, Tommy had quickly lifted Zachary about an inch total out of the quicksand, dropping him back in with failure; this caused Zachary to sink a few inches more.

"Zachary, why didn't you try?"

"I told you I can't!"

"It's just quicksand! Don't be afraid." But Tommy meant this more for himself, for he was extremely afraid right now of..."It".

He wiped his long, curly, hair out of his eyes, which the wind blew wildly, and stared at Zachary, who had twisted his head around to look towards the forest.

Tommy wanted to scold him for getting distracted, but he couldn't help but ask "Do you see it too?"

"Yes..."

This made Tommy feel a little better.

"And...it's coming closer," Zachary whispered.

This, however, panicked Tommy greatly, causing him to look at It again.

Zachary was right. It was coming closer. Tommy saw It begin to walk forward in his direction. It walked with an exaggeration of the long, dragging, arms that touched the floor. As if it somehow knew that this particular feature of it really creeped-out Tommy. Fortunately, it stopped...unfortunately, it stopped in a position where the moonlight shined it, so Tommy could now see the outline of the figure, even though it was still somewhat far away.

He could see its bald head and the long arms and legs. Shockingly, it wiggled its long arms once more, as if to, once again, show Tommy how long and creepy they are.

"What the fuck do you want?!" Tommy yelled through the thick wind.

The thing's only response was to wiggle its arms again.

"I'm warning you," Tommy nervously shouted.

Then the thing began to walk slowly forward again, but this time it didn't stop. It came to the point where in just a few steps forward, Tommy would be able to see its face. But for now, where it stands gazing down at them both, only a dark shadowed figure is seen through the foliage of the bushes and trees.

Tommy wanted to run away, but that'd mean leaving Zachary by himself to face this beast.

"If you don't step back," Tommy hesitated, "I'm going to get physical." He hoped that It didn't hear the shake within his voice; whereas, Zachary had no problem letting them both know how distressed he was from the quicksand; he began to cry in fear of sinking more.

Tommy gained enough courage to look away from It and say to his brother "Zachary, grab my hand *now*. We're getting outta here."

"**Nope**," It said within the . An eerie, dark, almost child-like, voice.

Tommy wanted to ignore It, but he couldn't help but say "What do you mean no?"

"I said 'nope', not 'no'," It said, giving a small chuckle afterwards. Then It took a step forward (1 more and Tommy will be able to see It's face, which he doesn't want to).

"Don't—"

"Don't what, Timmy?"

Tommy's stomach deepened with fear, and his throat became dry.

"It's Tommy, not Timmy," was the only thing he could think of replying.

"Uuuh, I like Timmy better."

"I don't care what you like, creep! Now, go away!"

Without warning, It finally moved out of the shadows and stood still just on the other side of the quicksand.

But what shocked Tommy was the fact that the creature, with long arms and legs, a balded head, that had been stalking him the past week, that he *just* saw within the shadows of the forest...was *not* standing in front of him. No. What had came out of the shadows, and stands in front of him now, is a clown.

As if a cat, for instance, casted the shadow of a dog was the only way Tommy could explain it to himself. However, in this case, it was of a clown casting the shadow of a "thing" with long limbs.

He was glad that he did not see the facial features of the "thing", but was much more upset than glad at the fact that in front of him stood a clown taller than him; the clown was around 6 and a half feet.

It wasn't the large forehead of the clown, or the red markings reaching down the cheek to its mouth, it was of the fact that it was drooling saliva while looking down at them both with a big smile.

Fortunately, the quicksand was around 6 feet long, so there was that much distance separating the clown from Tommy.

Silence fell between Tommy. He did not attempt another rescue at Zachary, or speak to the clown. The only sounds were of the wind, the quicksand churning, and Zachary's discomfoting whimpers and cries.

This whole situation had been confusing, and the best thing Tommy could do is react to whatever this clown would do. So he stood waiting for the clown's first move, if he had any, for the clown continued to smile at him with no intentions of breaking eye-contact.

"Timmy, I think it's time for you to leave."

A facial expression of confusion/anger/fear entered all at once within Tommy's face, followed by the words of "Uhhh, excuse me?! You leave, you fucking creep!"

"Well, I'm just starving," the clown said with an unnatural giggle.

This urged Tommy to attempt another quick rescue to Zachary, but failed when he grabbed Zachary by the hands and, unbelievably, a hand in the quicksand had pulled him back in.

"What the fuck was that!" Tommy cried, trying his best to ignore the creepy clown standing right in front of him. Just as he tried to ignore the thing that stalked him earlier when he first discovered his brother in the sand.

If I don't see it, it isn't there, Tommy tells himself. *If I don't see it, it isn't there. If I don't see it, it isn't there!*

He tried once more to pull Zachary out, but two more beige-colored hands had grabbed him around his overalls and pulled him back in, making Zachary scream in pain.

"I told you! Something is in here with me!"

Tommy freaked out, not knowing what to do. His eyes were on the verge of crying. From his brother's predicament and the unexplainable hands.

"Do it! Grab him again!" The clown urged.

Tommy felt the saliva of the clown land on his forehead, causing him to look once more...he wish he hadn't. For the clown was smiling a big, toothy, smile, just like a child, and only one of the orange-colored eyes stared at him; the other stared at Zachary.

"Do it! Do it! Do it!" He kept hearing the clown mumble as he sat on his knees trying to think of any other solutions to this...predicament.

Quickly, Tommy grabbed a large stick and stabbed it into the sand, swishing it around. He wiggled it around to see if anything would happen, but nothing did...for a few seconds.

Then, something had grabbed the stick, prompting a tug-o-war of the two. What ended the battle was the fact that a hand had popped out of the sand, scaring Tommy, making him drop the stick; the stick was then pulled in and under the sand.

"Ah!" Zachary yelled.

"What?!"

"They're grabbing my feet!"

Tommy dived his hands into the quicksand, trying to scoop it out, but it was like scooping water. But he didn't give up. No. He tried and tried, all the while Zachary crying and squealing in pain.

"I don't know what to fucking do!" Tommy cried, giving up. The quicksand had covered his clothes completely, now.

Sadly, there was no point in helping, for many hands had covered Zachary's whole body, leaving just his teary face visible for Tommy to see. All the beige-colored hands had turned into black, ashy, dripping an oil like substance, hands that tried to feel every inch of Zachary's sinking body. Some of the fingers had entered his ears and nose. Multiple times his eyes were poked. No child deserved to feel this discomfort.

And when Tommy would try to attack these hands, they burnt his skin.

"Timmy! They're gonna pull me down!"

"No...no they're not! Just keep looking at me! I'm gonna get you outta there!"

"Timmy, I love you! I had fun today!"

"Me too! But I'm gonna save you, don't worry!"

In a matter of seconds, Zachary's sinking body had completely sunk—no, was pulled—into the quicksand. The only thing left in the quicksand was of bubbles. Tommy could do nothing but cry and continue to dig through the sand, but to no avail.

Then he felt it...the staring eyes. For he had forgotten about the clown. The stranger.

The creepy man dressed in a clown suit in the middle of the woods at nighttime.

Tommy's head slowly moved up to view him. But it wasn't the clown he was staring at, now. It was the "thing" that had been stalking him, illuminated by the moonlight. It!

And now that he could fully see it, he knew what this "thing" was. It's something that petrified him as a child. Something that he's seen only through a computer screen. The Slenderman. A tall, faceless, man in a suit, with long arms that reach the floor. And this was much taller than the 6 foot clown. Furthermore, it had leaned its slanted head down to look at him; and although he couldn't see any facial features or expressions, Tommy knew that it was smiling at him. Like the clown smiled at him...

Matter of fact, Tommy knew this *was* the clown. And what brought this theory all together was what it had said—no, what "It" had said.

"Don't you love these long arms, Timmy?"

And with that said, Tommy felt a hand lay on his left shoulder and give a tight squeeze.

Without turning back to look at what touched him (even though he knew it was It somehow), *or* wondering how It spoke to him without a mouth (the Slenderman has no facial features), *or* where his brother went, *or* how those hands came out of the quicksand, he ran away. Ran as fast as he could home. Past the dark, slender, trees and the big ferns and bushes. The branches had scratched his face as he ran, but it didn't matter.

But the entire time he ran through those woods, he could've sworn he heard the chuckling of the clown. All the while thinking of his brother's crying eyes and his innocent little kid body getting dragged down under the void of sand by the impossible demon-hands.

2. Chapter 2: Melissa and the Morgue 1-3

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"Good morning, Melissa," Mr. Herbert smiled with his toothless, gummy, mouth.

"Good morning to you too, Mr. Herbert! How was your night?" Melissa Joyner replied.

"It," Mr. Herbert paused, "was fine."

"Why the hesitation?"

"It's just," he chuckled, "well, I just had a bad dream, that's all."

"In all honesty, Mr. Herbert, it was probably just your pet rabbit banging on the cage," Melissa joked.

"Speak for yourself, with your goldfish."

"Hey...goldfish are awesome," she smiled.

While the conversation continued, Melissa rolled Mr. Herbert's wheelchair to the edge of his hospital-bed, and helped him sit in it as comfortably as he could.

"What's for breakfast today?" He whispered as Melissa rolled him across the crowded main hallways of Metropolitan Hospital.

"Burritos."

"Again?" He asked in disappointment.

She nodded with a frown.

Melissa wasn't some ordinary caretaker who just came in and did her job for a paycheck. She knew these patients were sick and dying, and that she must be a happy face in the crowd for them.

Melissa has met many Mr. Herberts before, and she will meet many more. For Mr. Herbert is a crippled, old, man whose remaining days will be spent in this hospital, being served death-food and given care.

As she gazes at the elderly people in the lobby area (either watching TV, playing puzzles, or talking to one another), she stresses over her own life and if it will end this way, as well. But in her case it would

be her delivering her own food and caring for herself. In other words, she'd be a caretaker her whole life, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but is somewhat lame compared to the actual doctors and nurses that work here. Colleges weren't so accepting of her average grades and whatnot, so the next best thing in helping people was a caretaker...which wouldn't be a bad thing if it weren't for the low pay. Nonetheless, Melissa enjoyed helping people.

But what really sets in the mood of "I'm going to be here forever and never going to advance" is Melissa's group of young-adult coworkers.

"Yea, I'm gaining experience for my college applications," Albert told the group whilst sipping coffee.

"Me too," Megan replied. "What about you, Melissa?"

She gulped with shyness. "I...uh...I like my job right now."

"Aren't you like 30 ("28, actually," Melissa quietly interjects) years old? Shouldn't you still be trying to get a better job...no offense," Albert says.

"I'm just not ready."

That's how you could describe Melissa's whole life in one phrase: "I'm just not ready."

For she is not a risk-taker...or a courageous person in general.

The other adults just sorta looked at each other privately in an awkward facial expression, making Melissa feel left out.

While walking to the kitchen to collect the "special" morning-juice (medicine) for newly-diagnosed patient, Gary Winston, a suicide survivor with 3rd degree burns, she walks past an unused hallway bordered off with yellow, crime, tape.

It was recently taped off when, just a month ago, during a rainy day, a sudden electrical outburst had electrified 10 patients. All bodies were immediately taken to the...Morgue.

Melissa's palms had begun to sweat at the thought of the "Morgue." It carried such boldness. A place where the dead are taken. Just the word itself induced fear in her. Yet she's never been there, nor has ever pushed the elevator button that reads "Floor 00", plus she doesn't

even have permission to go down there.

Her only job that includes the Morgue in any way, is to immediately call the Doctors, nurses, or staff when she's discovered a dead patient in their hospital bed. Those few minutes of her in the same room alone with the dead body are hell. A soulless sack of flesh and bone either staring at her with wide-open waterless eyes or closed ones she must pry open herself to make sure the human is dead; she doesn't know which one is worse.

And as she walked past this dark abandoned hallway, she felt a burst of cold air cool her sweaty palms. *The Morgue must be this cold*, she thought.

Ironically, the Morgue is located in the basement, which happens to be just below this taped off hallway; better known as "Hallway 10".

After receiving the medicine-juice, she took the elevator to the 4th floor and walked to Gary Winston's room, which was at the very end of his hallway.

Gary was laying in his bed, staring out the window located to his right. His head was bandaged completely, only revealing his nose, eyes, and mouth. He resembled a mummy.

"Hey, Gary," Melissa cheered, but no response was given.

"I got your juice..."

Gary sat up straight and stared at her...more so her face specifically.

"Such a pretty young thing," he murmured to her.

"Thank you, Mr. Winston. Right back at you, sir," she responded with a smile while placing his juice and breakfast-tray on his desk to his left.

"Don't kid yourself. I'm a mess. If you think I look bad now, you should've seen me without the cast?" He giggled.

"I think you look lovely," she replied trying to make good conversation. But based on his quiet voice and slouched posture, she knew something was "off".

"I, uh, wanna tell you something."

"What is it?" She asked with soft eyes.

"I wanna tell you how I got these burns."

"Oh, no, no. It's ok. You don't have to. I already know you were in an accident," she replied kindly.

"I wanna tell you what *caused* it."

She stood quiet as to say "Alrighty, go ahead."

"I had gotten a call from my brother, and one thing lead to another, I was on my way to New York, my home. But see, when I moved to Indiana, I was around 22, I had somehow forgotten some memories; as we all do. But these memories were too dark to just forget. And I had definitely 100% forgotten them, surprisingly."

Melissa continuously nodded throughout the conversation. She was really intrigued and curious to where this was all leading.

"As soon as I entered New York, I felt It. I knew It was back. For the 3rd time...It awakens every 27 years." Gary paused, tearing up, "Henry had figured it all out."

Melissa had felt sympathy for this man. Obviously something had happened to him multiple times. But she had no idea what he was talking about...yet.

"And I tell you all this because my crash was no accident. What did they tell you caused the accident?"

"Uh," Melissa thought for a few seconds, "it was raining and a flat tire caused you to swerve off-road into a tree, catching the car on fire."

"All that was true. But I saw something. You won't believe me if I told you."

"You can tell me," Melissa added, curious as ever.

"I saw...Henry in the middle of the road. He died exactly 27 years ago. Do you understand?"

She shook her head.

"Melissa, It's back. It's been 27 years."

"What's It?"

"It is the manifestation of evil and fear, Melissa."

He stopped to cry, urging her to enter the bathroom of his room and get toilet paper for his tears. He wiped the tears that flowed down his cast, which dropped to his lips.

"Do you need anything else? You don't have to continue what you were saying."

"No!" He whimpered. This shook her, making her step back in fear. "I need to tell you this."

"I don't want you to feel sad," she said in pure sorrow for his tear, old, man eyes.

"Look. It's back. And It's here. In this hospital. Right now. It caused the accident. It knows I'm back. And It wants me," he spoke with a raised and rushed voice.

He dropped to the floor in pain. Hollering and gurgling saliva.

"Oh my gosh! I'll go get a nurse!" Melissa shrieked, thinking he was having a seizure, while turning her back to run.

She yelled out the hallway for assistance, and a Doctor immediately responded, running in her direction.

"A Doctor's coming," she said, feeling panicked.

"Oh my gosh," Gary mumbled through his saliva.

"What?! What is it?"

"*It knows*. It knows I've told you everything."

"Who's It?!" She asked in fear.

"Melissa, don't trust anyone or anything. *It won't hurt you if you're not scared*. Don't be scared."

The Doctor had arrived into the room, followed by a few nurses. They commanded Melissa to leave, which she obeyed. She would have left anyways. This was, to say the least, a confusing and creepy experience.

She rushed her way back into the elevator and to the ground floor. Not knowing how to process everything that happened, she went to the bathroom to "clean up".

As she washed her terrified face, she thought of the things he said. How Gary had put such emphasis on the word "It". Reminding her of

the word "Morgue," and how she thought of it with such boldness and power.

She straightened her blue, hospital, scrubs and left the bathroom to continue her job of delivering terrible hospital food to people in need.

The day ended with Melissa rolling back Mr. Herbert in his wheelchair to his room, which caused her to pass that wretched hallway, giving her goosebumps. Although Mr. Herbert spoke to her along the entire roll, she was more focused on Gary Winston and everything he had said.

I saw...Henry in the middle of the road. He died exactly 27 years ago. It is the manifestation of evil and fear, Melissa. It's back. And It's here. In this hospital. Right now. It wants me. It knows I've told you everything. Melissa, don't trust anyone or anything. It won't hurt you if you're not scared. Don't be scared.

"Ms. Joyner, can you please leave the light on of the room," Mr. Herbert asks, bringing her out of her thoughts.

"Of course. Have a good night. I'll see you tomorrow," she replied politely, closing his hospital room door.

Mr. Herbert turns on the TV of the room and drinks the glass of water that sits on his nightstand beside his hospital bed. While giving a deep, worried, sigh, he whispers to himself "It was just a dream...it wasn't real."

Melissa takes the night bus to her townhouse on Vice Street. Her townhouse is an ugly-looking, brick red, two-story that shares the wall of two constantly arguing parents of a five-year-old, little, boy.

The bus ride was, as usual, nothing special. Just a few minutes of sitting on the public green bench, sharing it sometimes with a few strangers/bus-users. Most of the time, however, she is alone in the bus because of the inconsistent, late, hours she leaves work; she works over-time serving food and caring for as many patients as possible. Right now, the time reads 8:13pm.

She does this because of the fact that she *needs* the money. If she ever

wants to buy a car, or a better house, then she must make/save as much money as possible from this low-paying job. After all, this is New York City...very expensive.

She did see something out of the ordinary that you do not see much of in New York City these days. A clown.

Just as the bus stopped at a corner red-light, she noticed a clown waving at her in the midst of the orange street-light. A pleasant thing; nothing too unusual. The way he smiled looked as if he was off to live his dream of being a performer, or something of that sort. As if he arrived in New York to pursue his dreams of running a circus. His outfit was a throwback to the victorian ages, and, what intrigued her the most, was the red marks down its eyes that eventually connected to the large, red-painted, "Ronald Mcdonald-like" smile. Furthermore, his tufts of orange hair surrounding the white, bald, head brought a shy giggle along with her smile.

Little did Melissa know that this "clown" was not here in New York City to pursue his "dreams of running a circus".

3. Chapter 3: Hope's Horrific Hauntings 1-3

Chapter 3: Hope's Horrific Hauntings 1-3

You know that house on the street that is looked down upon by all the other neighbors? The one that your mother slows down the car just to say something despicable like "Eww look at their weeds" or "Why is their roof falling apart?"

Well that's Hope Barber's home.

In three words it would be described as a "pile of shit". The inside is no better. There are rats, bed-bugs, curtains that were shredded by moths, couches that looked to have been stolen from a dump—which very well could have been, for Hope's mother, Amy, has a habit of stealing whenever she could.

Amy works as a waitress in a low-class pizza joint, where, whenever she could, steals money from purses and coats. And if she sees a higher-class, or rich, person, her eyes light up in sparks for pay-day has arrived. It's a miracle how the place hasn't shut down from all the complaints of theft, or how Amy hasn't been fired. I guess it helps that her boyfriend happens to be the owner of the place.

Speaking of boyfriends, Amy would rather spend time with them than her own daughter, Hope. Hope, however, has gotten used to this self-centered attitude of her mother. As long as her mom is paying for the homeschool teacher, Quinn James (a 32-year-old African American woman), Hope doesn't complain much.

Matter of fact, whenever Quinn is around, Hope doesn't notice her mother is gone. Quinn is what Hope expects a good mother to be. Caring, kind, passionate, and determined to make her child succeed. Amy's inconsistent payments toward Quinn still doesn't affect her attitude in homeschooling Hope. She really believes that Hope has a shot at college.

Today is October 15th, and where Hope resides now is in the grassy field along the fallen Autumn leaves beside Central Park's pond.

She gazes at the ducks and geese within the pond, and the sparrows in the trees. What really catches her attention, though, are the children playing on the other side of the pond with the bunches of leaves; throwing their hands in the air whilst the leaves of the branches fall on their tiny heads. She smiles at their joy and happy child wonder.

She lays on her side in the somewhat grassy ground, with a mixture of dirt and leaves, and skips pebbles across the pond; her highest score being 7.

Although she wouldn't admit it, she would've loved for someone to draw a portrait of her now. Because as the leaves land on her head, they camouflage within her reddish, shoulder-length, wavy, hair. It really is a beautiful sight.

Then she heard it. Nothing. The children had stopped giggling and cheering from the other side of the pond. Of course, she thought nothing bad of the situation. *They just left somewhere else*, she thought. *I should, too.*

She stood up, wiping leaves off her gray shorts, and stretched her back from side to side.

The small cobblestone bridge is just to her left, where she could just use that instead of walking along the edge of the entire pond just to get to the other side. And from the other side lies a gravel path leading to the exit of Central Park. That is where she'd take a long walk to her neighborhood on the outskirts of New York City, where the buildings gradually get smaller and smaller, and houses exist.

But as she turned to look at the bridge just a few yards ahead, she noticed a red balloon attached to a very small, rectangular, white, box with a pink bow slapped on the top.

Peculiar, she thought while walking towards it.

Now, her mother steals, but that doesn't mean she didn't. Hope Barber, after all, lived in a crappy house, wearing clothes that have moth holes in them, and smelled like dust. If there was something useful in that small box, she'd take it. This would not be the first time

she stole, and this wouldn't be her last. Matter of fact, she steals as much as she could...especially from the rich. *They're rich*, she tells herself, *they can afford a couple bucks less*.

She arrives at the bridge (the middle of the bridge) and studies this tiny box. It was small enough to fit in her hand. Her head followed the string from the balloon to the shiny, red, top shining from the sun. There was an urge that came in her that wanted to pop that balloon; just a small urge.

First thing she did was slowly untie the knot of the pink bow. Then she flipped the box upside down to begin unwrapping it from the bottom. She threw the white wrapping paper on the floor of the stone bridge. What was left was an actual white box now. Very easily, she took off the top part of the case and placed it on the stone-wall railing of the bridge.

Inside of the box was a shallow opening that contained a piece of white paper. She grabbed the blank paper and turned it around to see...those haunting words.

"Why did Daddy leave?"

Her eyes dried up from the long stare she gave to the note, which was shaking from her trembling fingers.

She hadn't thought of her father in years. Or at least spoke of him out loud to anyone. And no matter how much she hated her mother, and likewise for her mother, they never discussed him. Never said his name—David—or even, in any way, inferred him. All the depressing thoughts of her...childhood...were lost within the depths of her mind. Those thoughts of...

No.

Let go. Don't think of it. She thought. But poor Hope, for flashing images of her young years had flooded her mind completely.

"Stay in the closet! Don't come out until I open the door! If you open this door, I'm gonna beat your ass!"

"Call my mommy, now! This hurts! My neck...ouch!"

"Daddy, why didn't you come to the park with me?"

"Daddy, I missed you...did you miss me?"

"Daddy, why did mommy slam the door?"

"Shut the fuck up, Hope! Go to your room! I've had enough of you constantly nagging me!"

"You've been a bad girl this year, Hope. Santa Claus is not gonna come. Krampus is. He eats children who misbehave."

"Mommy, why did Daddy leave?"

Then, as if automatic, her lips made out the phrase "Why are Mommy and Daddy mean to me?"

It wasn't her 14-year-old self talking. No. It was of her 6-year-old self.

A tear flowed down her cheek. But those sad feelings were immediately overshadowed by angry ones. Her fists clenched and she punched that box; then she threw it into the pond. She made sure the note was stomped on and torn before throwing it in the water.

As for the red balloon that was left in the grasp of her hand. She wanted the pleasure of popping it, but something else had caught her attention, making her release the string from her grip. The balloon floated high into the air, passing along Central Park and, presumably, past the skyscrapers of Manhattan.

What caught her attention was a flier paper taped on the end column of the stone bridge. It read *"Missing: Zachary Dawson. Age 3. Date of Vanishing 10-5-2017."*

Unfortunately, just as the horrible childhood thoughts were disappearing, this flier had brought just one more.

"Hey...Hope, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Look...I have a lollipop! Do you want it?"

"Well...I don't really like lollipops."

"Oh, that's ok! I also got this really cool chocolate bar..."

"Oooh! Can I...I mean...may I have it, please?"

"Of course, come and get it."

4. Chapter 4: Hope's Horrific Hauntings 2-3

Chapter 4: Hope's Horrific Hauntings 2-3

If Hope told anybody, especially her mother (if she did care to listen), she'd be laughed at. Because what happened yesterday was unbelievable. Even more unbelievable than that note at the bridge talking about *her* father that left when she was 6. The note that had written exactly what Hope had asked her mother just 8 years ago: "Where did Daddy go?" The note that brought back such horrific memories.

All in all, the note was *made* to grab *her* attention. It was made to pull her in its despair and wonder. Someone had put it there for the exact purpose of her reading it and feeling like absolute shit. Not only did it bring up her father, but it brought back other bad memories about her childhood past. Most of which she, luckily, forgot about as she grew up.

The thought of poor little Jimmy who fell out of the large apple tree. The apple tree that Hope and Jimmy climbed all the time in the neighborhood. Jimmy had turned 7 that year, and it showed. For a branch had snapped off, making him fall and completely snap his neck. It left such a bad scar in Hope's mind, that every night, for many years, she pictured Jimmy's dying body crying "Call my mommy, now! This hurts! My neck...ouch!" while his hands were around his perfectly curved, flamingo-like, neck.

And that memory was the most tame of the bunch. There were worse ones. Way, way, worse.

Without a doubt, what happened just yesterday in her room had topped them all by far. Just the fact that it was happening really blew her mind. To say the least, she could not believe what was happening just beneath her feet.

Hope had arrived in her street from Central Park after finding that distressing note. She passed the usual buildings and streets until she stopped at her suburban one; the neighborhood on the outskirts of New York City. There were lots of nice houses in the street...all were

decent except for hers.

She was used to the looks she and Amy (her mother) got. Of course, they weren't obvious looks of disgust towards her home and clothes, but they weren't too subtle to miss. If neighbors stopped to stare at her for just a few seconds (milliseconds, even) then quickly stared/talked at each other, she knew they were talking about her. Some of the kids she knew growing up had made fun of her face-to-face. But now that they've grown up and have gotten much more politer, they won't say it to her face, but she knows they say it behind her back.

And those are just her neighbors. She gets actual bad looks from the "rich" people of New York. Then there's her mother's ex-boyfriends who want to harass Hope on the street.

The time read 6:00pm. Her homeschooling ended at 12am, so she had spent a total of 6 hours outside in Central Park.

The homeschooling usually went along the lines of: Hope and Quinn going to the local bookstore for coffee and Reading class (Quinn pays), then back home for Math and Social Studies, finally, at the end of the hour is Writing, but they both usually spend it on talking to each other. To be frank, they usually speak to each other about off-topic things the entire day of lessons. But it never affected Hope at all. She still gets very good grades; Quinn tells her all the time about how smart she is. Quinn doesn't just homeschool Hope; she tutors many actual students in school, so she has a comparison of Hope vs. school-kids.

After telling Hope about a particular "bad" student, Quinn joked "Why are the rich kids always the dumb ones?" In turn, this made Hope actually giggle louder than she usually did.

Whenever Hope giggled, Quinn felt as if she made her own daughter giggle. It wasn't a weird thing to think, for they both knew, actually, that Hope would much rather prefer Quinn as her mother. They've never said it out-loud to each other, or to anyone, but it was no secret. Could Amy tell? Probably. Did it affect her in any way of how she treated Hope? Nope.

Hope stood outside of her front-door, which has a storm-screen that

is broken (just like the rest of her home). She knew her mother was home with a man because a car, one Hope had never seen before, was parked in the driveway next to her mother's dusty, green, truck.

She had the idea of opening this stranger's car and stealing something from inside, but it quickly faded.

First thing she saw when she opened the front door was her mother, Amy, kissing her "pizza restaurant" boyfriend. She could see the saliva drip down his greasy beard.

"Gross," Hope hissed while walking past them both. Her mother, as always, gave no response. More giggles and kisses were heard as Hope walked through the hallway and into her room; shutting the door tight (the door had no lock).

She waited for the signal. The signal of her mother saying "Let's get out of here," then the door opening/shutting.

And as it happened, she quickly took out the "flier". The one she had found just after she opened the "box". The box that was wrapped up in decoration paper and a bow slapped on the top, plus a shiny red balloon, all just so she could read the "note".

Then there was the flier...about a missing kid. They were so close, yet so far. Could they be connected? No. Of course not...right? Hope for sure didn't know. But anything would've help her understand this situation. Someone obviously knew her life as much as she did. Whoever this person was, they wanted Hope to open the "present". It was *meant* for *her*.

She had studied this missing-flier top to bottom and noticed three important things:

1. The writer was a 14-year-old boy named "Tommy Dawson".
2. He lives in Manhattan (Central Park is located in the center of there).
3. The name of his apartment is "353 Central Park West".

She had no idea where that was. She would search it online, but her family didn't own any electronics. Not even a TV. Quinn has a phone—well a cheap android—but she'd have to wait for Monday because

she doesn't have school on the weekends (It's Friday).

Quinn is in no way rich, but isn't poor either; she's middle-class. She doesn't really look it, though. Quinn's hair is always made in a high bun, with a pen stabbed through. Her light-brown skin compliments the black pencil skirt and white blouse she always wears; and now that it's getting colder in the year, she's begun to wear white, collared, sweaters. Basically, she dresses in professional clothes; she is a tutor/homeschool teacher after all.

Furthermore, she is always carrying around a notebook in her left hand and a red pen in the other. Her professionalism really adds a few hundreds. In reality, she's more wealthy than the Barbers (Hope and Amy), but a little less than all the other neighbors on the block.

Hope had decided to take action tomorrow. But because she didn't have school tomorrow (meaning no Quinn James, further meaning no phone), she'd go to the public library and use the computers there to search up the address of this "Tommy Dawson". Then she thought of something she didn't think of.

Should I tell Quinn what happened in the park? Would she believe me? Of course she would! But the true question, and Hope knew it, was if Hope would believe herself...if that made sense. Because after seeing something as shocking as that, you'd question yourself severely. Am I going crazy? She may have been. I don't even have proof...I threw it in the pond.

"Ugh," she groaned out loud, for her thoughts overwhelmed her; giving her a headache. Hope decided to sleep it off. She pulled the soft blanket over her (which Quinn bought for her birthday last year) and laid her head on the pillow—which had lost most of its softness over the years.

Just as she closed her eyes for sleep, she heard a laugh. A creepy laugh, to say the least. It was just one fast "hehehe". But it was enough for her to frantically sit up straight on her bed, with her legs dangling off the edge of it.

She saw, through the somewhat opened blinds of her window, the night arriving fast. It is Autumn after all.

The only sounds within the house were of the October winds blowing at the walls. No one was home. Her mother, and boyfriend, had left a few minutes ago. It was just Hope in her own home...presumably. Well, it was accompanied by rats and moths, but they don't—better yet, can't—laugh.

She peered outside the blinds of her window. The "pizza restaurant" boyfriend's car was not in the driveway. And, actually, that was where she heard the "hehehe"; just outside the window. *Who just laughed?* She asked herself with seriousness. This strange laugh had caused such distress in her.

Then it happened. The terror. The impossible.

Just beneath her dangling feet began loud rumbling. Like the sounds of destruction she hears when a building is demolished in the city. It was so abrupt that her legs had quickly picked up from the dangling position as if it was a reflex. Then she leaned her head forward at the floor of her room.

To her shock, the tiles of the floor began to crumble and fall. Literally. The floor had sunk so fast that it reminded Hope of sinkholes she reads in the New York Public Library. And this may have very well been the case. A sinkhole in her room.

But a sink-hole that looked to stretch all the way down to Hell? Not even Hell. Much deeper than that. Void, even.

The destruction began as an irregular shape, taking 1/3 of her room floor down into the void, but as it continued to collapse, it took the form of a polygon.

The desk against the right wall had fallen down into the dark abyss, and so did a few rats that lived under it. She heard them squeaking as they fell down. They never hit ground. Their squeaks only became quieter and quieter the longer they fell.

Luckily, the bed did not move, like an anchor it was stuck. Moreover, her bed was isolated in its own little island of concrete and tile-floor.

Disgustingly, many rats on the other side of the room were jumping

over the hole to her little island of floor, then they hid under her bed. Over time, she heard a whole colony of mice under her.

These rats gave her an idea: jump over the hole.

Unfortunately, as if this hole had read her mind, her little island began to fracture, becoming shorter and shorter. Now, her side literally consisted of only the area of her bed and the ground below it. Sweat flowed down her cheeks and her breathing intensified.

Silence came. She could only hear the occasional crack and crumble of the floor falling down into the darkness of the void. Yet the noises all around her (outside of the house) remained the same. The tweeting of birds, the winds of October, and cars parking in the driveways.

"Help!" She screamed. "Help me!" But no one responded from outside. It's not as if they didn't want to. No one could hear her. The window was sealed and the blinds were closed. Hope couldn't open the window because, not only was it too far (she'd have to stretch her arm out to attempt an opening of the glass/blinds), she was much too afraid.

Matter of fact, Hope has a fear of heights. Ever since the "apple tree fall of Jimmy" when she was 6-years-old, being high up anywhere has not been a good feeling for her. That's why she's never voluntarily tried to fix her own house roof.

And as she stuck her head out into the air to look at the void that now took 2/3 of the room, her head became dizzy. She's never had the privilege to go to any amusement park, but she'd expect the "rush" you get when going down in a roller-coaster to be the same feeling she just got.

Uncontrollably, she puked on the mattress of her bed, wiping some vomit out of her red, tangled, hair...causing her to puke even more.

The silence had finally faded away and, within a matter of seconds, her concrete island began to collapse. The hordes of mice under her bed were squeaking loud, the sounds of demolition increased, and, most of all, her sweat now soaked her hands and her heartbeat was

now in her throat. She knew what she had to do.

As the bed slid down into the void-hole in a diagonal position, she launched herself 3 yards off the cushy mattress and used her hands to catch the doorknob of the door.

The only thing stopping Hope from falling into the darkness of the hole was the brown doorknob that her sweaty hands gripped.

Her feet—no, her whole body—was dangling above abyss. Then she looked down. It was a fast peek that she immediately regretted.

Somehow, her entire room, and only her room, had collapsed and fallen down. Literally, only her room. She saw the layers of: house walls, then tile, then concrete, then dirt and stone; the dirt and stone never ended because, as her eyes followed deeper down the hole, it became too dark to see. Furthermore, pipes, electrical-cords, and sewage tubes were all poking out of the ground that surrounded the area of her squared room. It's as if the universe wanted *only* the floor of her room to just fall.

She felt her hands begin to give out from the sweat and the strength. Her immediate move was to find a place for her feet. Her legs moved desperately along the wall and door trying to find any place to stay; a ledge of some sort.

Luckily, she felt a pipe and her feet laid upon it. However, since her door opens from the inside, she had to climb downwards so that she could twist the doorknob, opening the door without her in the way of it.

From pipe to pipe, or cracks in the wall big enough for her feet to lay in, she made her way down far enough to the point that her head was just below the 1-inch gap that resides under the door.

Her breathing intensified, and her feet were shaking. She imagined that any second the cracks her feet laid into would crumble. Or the ground below the gap under the door, of which her hands were inserted into, would collapse, as well.

But they never did.

Courageously, she twisted the doorknob and opened the door a crack, so that she could get low enough down to just bend her fingers in the gap and gently pull the door out of the doorframe, swinging it open.

She carried herself over the tiles with haste, looked back one more time to see the void, and slammed the door shut.

Hope dropped to the hallway floor (which was only lit by the sunset coming through the windows of the house), and the first thing she did was bawl very loudly. The tears and snot from her nose had created a puddle below her face. Her lips shook as she thought of how close to death she was. She didn't even stop to think of *how* it happened. She only thought of her life and her leaving Quinn. That even though she had a bad life at home, she still loved her life.

Her voice dialed down to a soft cry now, and she whispered the first person's name she thought of: "Quinn". Hope felt like it was the only thing she could say to make herself feel better. "Quinn!" She cried, to no one in particular but herself.

Just the thought of them both together really reassured herself. The times when Quinn made her giggle, as no other person ever had. When Quinn bought her an enormous hot-dog from a street-vendor in Manhattan. How one time when it was raining, Quinn took Hope into her cozy apartment, where they sat and drank hot chocolate. The good times they had together.

Ding, dong! The doorbell rang.

Hope stopped whimpering, wiped the mucus and tears out of her face, and slowly stood up, to not make a sound. She combed her hair with her fingers and, totally disregarding what just happened, walked down the hallway with a slow rhythm until she reached the living room, where to her right was the front-door.

Through the blurry, glass, sidelight window (the small window beside the front-door) a human figure was standing.

After what happened, she didn't trust anything. And don't think she forgot that creepy laugh just before the sink-hole happened. That sink-hole that somehow confined itself to only be the exact shape of

the floor of her room.

With an angry face of "I've been through shit already, what next," she looked through the peephole and saw...Quinn!

Hope spent the next 3 minutes swinging the door wide-open and hugging her. Quinn, who explained to Hope that she left her notebook here, hugged Hope back with much love.

"Please," Hope cried out, "you need to see this."

Quinn followed Hope to the outside of her room, where Hope told Quinn to stay far back as she carefully opened the door.

To her astonishment...everything was perfectly fine. Her bed was in the left corner of the room, where her window was, and her desk was where it was before it fell, and her mirror hung on the wall to her right, and the rug of her room laid perfectly on top of the tile.

Quinn rushed past Hope and entered the room with excitement, leaving Hope in the hallway. Quinn, shrieking with joy, cheered "Oh my gosh! Someone left a present for you, you lucky girl!"

As Quinn asked "Who's it from" with a happy smile (whilst flipping it to the underside to reveal a slit in the wrapping paper), Hope's eyes twitched with many emotions; anger, confusion, fright, sadness.

Hope's stomach tensed, and she almost vomited again. For there, on the desk near her bed and window, sat a white, small, rectangular, box with a pink bow, and, most importantly, a red...shiny...*balloon*.

5. Chapter 5: Melissa and the Morgue 2-3

Chapter 5: Melissa and the Morgue 2-3

Hello!

I would just like to ask of you to please re-read the first two chapters, for I have significantly edited them. This chapter may not even make sense if you don't re-read them.

Thank you!

A crowd of people, including Melissa Joyner, step out of the morning bus and walk to their townhouses.

In her hands are two grocery bags; one containing toilet paper, the other having toothpaste and snacks.

She walks along the sidewalk, which is covered in leaves and tree roots that come out of the concrete, cracking and crumbling it. A few times, she had to step over some large roots. And these roots were not the color of brown, as they are in Summer, they were the color of ugly gray. Well, for most people, they were the color of beautiful Autumn trunk and wood, but she saw them as another sign of death/dying.

She reaches the top of the steps to her townhouse, lays her grocery bags on the floor, and searches for her keys in her purse. She flips through all the receipts, tissue bags, pens, and, finally, finds her keys.

While unlocking the door, she hears shouting coming from her right side. It was of her neighbors, Patty and Daniel Nicholson. Melissa had never heard them argue that loud before. She'd hear them all the time inside her home (they share a wall), but it was never loud enough to hear them outside of it.

Curiosity caused her to peek through the side window of their home.

Patty was screaming and pointing her finger at Daniel, whereas

Daniel was not even looking at her; he was clenching his fist while storming around the living room. This was serious, of course, but what really tempted Melissa to do something was their 5-year-old child, Christopher, bawling his eyes out in the corner of the room.

Melissa debated whether she should do something, seeing that all the neighbors quickly rushed in their homes as soon as the yelling began; as if no one wanted to deal with it.

Then, to Melissa's surprise, the Nicholson's front-door opened wide, followed by Daniel's body being literally thrown out onto the pavement of the sidewalk. *Patty Nicholson is definitely a tough girl*, she thought.

Daniel looked directly at Melissa in embarrassment. And just as his face turned red, and his fists clenched so hard that they turned purple-colored, Melissa took action, for she knew that he was going to get physical back at Patty.

As Daniel stomped his way towards the steps of his house, Melissa laid her hands on his shoulder.

"Uh, Daniel. Please don't—" but Daniel had swatted her hand away in irritation.

"Stay out!" Patty shouted while throwing a plastic bag full of Daniel's clothes onto the sidewalk.

"You bitch!" He yelled in response.

"Daniel, calm down," Melissa begged.

"Don't tell me to calm down! She just threw all my shit on the floor!"

"I know, but let's just stop and think for a second."

"Trust me," Daniel said while opening the trunk of his car, "I am."

He pulled out a large, metal, pole.

"Daniel, no! Don't, Daniel, please!" Melissa begged, trying to help out the situation.

Disregarding Melissa, Daniel walks to the front door and shouts "I'm sick of your shit, Patty! Open the door, or I'm coming in myself!"

"I've called the cops, and they're on their way! Don't think of doing

anything regrettable!"

"Fuck you!"

And with that said, Daniel smashed the door-handle off with the pole and kicked the door extremely hard, causing it to fall down like a domino.

Melissa had a burst of courage and ran towards Daniel, trying to pull the pole away from him. In a fit of rage, Daniel punched her, making her fall down the steps and onto the pavement. Her eyes began to tear up.

Then she heard the sounds of something rumbling. It wasn't of thunder (there was no rain), or the wind (there wasn't much of it), it was of a motorcycle zooming its way down the street.

She looked towards the street (to her right), and saw a someone jumping out of their motorcycle and running towards Daniel. As they ran, they unbuckled their helmet, revealing an Asian man around his late-20s.

The man yanked the pole right out of Daniel's hand, leaving him defenseless. He then threw the pole onto the sidewalk far away from Daniel.

They stared at each other, waiting for someone to say something. Their faces were an inch apart.

The Asian man breathed a long breath and finally said "What're you doin?"

Shocked at the response, Daniel said "Uh, girlfriend kicked me out."

"So you broke the door?"

"Ye."

The confrontation was weird, to say the least.

"Then you punched this lil lady here?" The Asian man said whilst pointing at Melissa.

"That was an accident."

"So why didn't you apologize when you did it?"

"Cus I was mad. And still am."

Melissa knew that Daniel was scared of this Asian man. It was obvious from the tone of his voice, and the fact that his eyes never met his.

"Are you okay?" The man asked Melissa.

"I'm fine, thank you," she replied with teary eyes.

But as the man turned around, Daniel had already punched him square on the jaw.

"Aww," he groaned. But not in a hurt way. In a pleasure sort of way. "You sure do hit hard, fella. Gave me a scare there." As he massaged the bruise, he looked at Melissa and said "You're my witness. I was just defending myself." And he got up and tackled Daniel, dropping him hard on the pavement.

The two wrestled on the floor for about a minute. And within that minute, the Police had arrived, handcuffing them both, but only putting Daniel in the police car.

Patty came out with a luggage bag filled with Daniel's clothes and knick-knacks. Patty sure was one tough girl to just ignore Daniel's aggressive attitude and pack his shit, all the while a fight was happening outside of her broken door.

Melissa stood up and wiped off the dirt on her jeans and sweatshirt. To her left was Patty hugging Christopher at the doorway of what used to be the front door, and to her right were the Police speaking to Daniel and the Asian man.

She was cut off guard when the Asian man shouted "Hey! You were my witness. She was my witness."

Melissa nodded in response.

"I want a restraining order," Patty yelled from the house.

After a few minutes, the Police concluded the situation. They took Daniel to jail, told Patty to acquire evidence and go to the local courthouse for the restraining order, and told the Asian man to carry on with his day. But they spent a while speaking to him. Laughing with him, actually.

"Guilty as charged," the man had joked.

"No way that was you! Dude you were awesome!" A Police Officer had cheered.

"So when you performing next?"

"Sorry, boys, I'm on a two-week vacation," the man replied.

The Police finally left the area.

"Hello," the man greeted Melissa.

"Hi."

"Umm, I'm Jerry Cheng."

"I'm Melissa Joyner, it's nice to meet you."

"Likewise."

Jerry picked up his red helmet from the floor and whispered "So...why was that guy going crazy?"

"I don't know. They both argue all the time."

Jerry raised his head toward Patty, who was smoking cigarettes while sitting on the steps outside of her home with Christopher, and asked "Do ya need help repairing that door?"

"Nah. I called my brother; he's coming over later to help."

"Oh, alrighty."

"So what was all that chatting about with the Police?" Melissa politely asked.

"Oh," Jerry chuckled, "I'm a performer—a motorcycle stunt-show performer—and they went to one of my shows in Pennsylvania."

"Really?" Melissa was impressed.

"Yes, ma'am. Right now, though, I'm on vacation, so no driving for a few weeks. Well I do drive at night. And...wow...this city really never sleeps."

"I know right," she smiled.

And as Jerry described his job more to Melissa, she couldn't help but think how fun her life would be if she did what he did. Driving into the night. Doing daredevil stunts for an audience. *I've never even ridden a motorcycle before*, she thought.

But she wants to help people on a personal level, and performers don't get to do that. And her job allows her to.

Something had tugged Melissa's sweatshirt, grabbing her attention. It was Christopher, the Nicholson's son.

"Hi, Christopher," Melissa smiled. But Christopher continued to pull on her white sweatshirt.

"Who's this wittle guy?" Jerry asked.

"This is Christopher, Patty and Daniel's son. Daniel was the man who just got arrested, and Patty is her," Melissa pointed toward the doorway to where Patty was previously sitting, but she wasn't there.

"Oh. He's cute ain't he? Doesn't look a thing like Daniel, though."

All the while, Christopher never stopped tugging, finally prompting Melissa to look where he was pulling, which happened to be on her back area.

To her astonishment, she felt something sticky and wet. She raised her hand to see blood all over it. With panicked eyes, she twisted her head around to see that there was blood all over her sweatshirt.

Immediately she felt embarrassed and worried.

"Uh, I gotta go," she said, cutting off Jerry's conversation.

"Oh, alrighty."

"Nice to meet you!" Jerry yelled as Melissa hurriedly made her way to her home, picking up the groceries she had left on the steps.

She ran to her room and immediately threw her sweatshirt on the bed, leaving her with the gray t-shirt she wore under.

She unfolded the sweatshirt quickly and saw the blood become bigger and bigger as she smoothed its wrinkles and folds. Panic had took over now, making her take off her t-shirt and feel her back for any scratches. There weren't. She wasn't bleeding or cut in any way. No pain in the back area at all. She rushed to the bathroom and stood in the mirror to clearly check.

After seeing nothing, she went back into her room and studied the blood on her white sweatshirt. But she hadn't noticed something. The blood...it formed a shape.

She moved her sweatshirt upside down and angled her head to see

carefully what this blood had formed. It was dark-red and still dripping down the cloth.

To best describe the shape, it was as if an animal—an animal with big, thick, long, claws—had dipped its whole hand in blood and made a handprint on her sweatshirt.

Melissa freaked out, breathing very loudly. It was morning outside, but her black curtains had made the room dark.

The rest of the day was spent washing the sweatshirt with her other laundry load, cleaning the house, taking a shower. Basically, anything to rid of that scary, bloody, claw-print out of her thoughts.

As the day ended, she thought of Mr. Winston's words. Could he have been telling the truth?

I saw...Henry in the middle of the road. He died exactly 27 years ago. It is the manifestation of evil and fear, Melissa. It's back. And It's here. In this hospital. Right now. It wants me. It knows I've told you everything. Melissa, don't trust anyone or anything. It won't hurt you if you're not scared. Don't be scared.

"Don't trust anyone or anything," Melissa repeated aloud.

Could it have been a coincidence that she was given this bloody mark on the same day she met Jerry Cheng?

6. Chapter 6: Tristan Takes a Swim 1-2

Chapter 6: Tristan Takes a Swim

Co-writer: Trevor the Enchanter

Reminder: Please reread the first two chapters for they've been heavily edited/changed. Thank you.

"Just for once, I wish she'd do her own damn homework," Tristan Harris sighed while finishing his sister's 3-page reading assignment.

He had helped her all the time in Elementary and Middle School, and had thought it would be different now that they were both in High School. But, no matter how tempting it was, he couldn't just let her fail...and trying to teach her was an utter nightmare, so here he was.

He pushed himself out of his chair, being careful not to wake anyone else in the house. It was past midnight, after all; a time when most 17-year-olds would have been snoring away. Tristan, on the other hand, had always been a night-owl. He knew school was tomorrow, but it wouldn't be the first sleepy day he'd go through and it wouldn't be the last.

He sneaked down the dark hallway as quietly as he could, but wasn't easy with his heavy tread. Tristan looked down at his stomach and scowled with disgust. He was a heavyset young man, and continuing to grow, despite all of his attempts to lose weight.

"Disgusting," he muttered to himself.

His sigh soon turned into muffled curses as his foot banged onto the couch that he had not noticed until it was too late.

Absently, he checked his phone to see if either Vicki or Robert had responded to his recent messages. It had been over 4 hours, and while they had been read, there was no response. *Are they forgetting about me?* He couldn't help but worry. He'd been close with those two

siblings all his life and didn't want to lose them now. Not after the "move," where he desperately needed company.

From what he had seen so far of New York City, Tristan utterly despised living here and was not shy about making his feelings known on that.

He had spent most of his life in a small town in Maine, thus living in the largest city in the nation had proven to be a massive adjustment for him. Whereas, his younger sister, Kelsey, had already made herself a group of friends, while his Mother was beginning a teaching job.

They had moved in the first place because his father had been offered a job at a computer company in New York City. At first, Tristan had been excited, having never been to a large city. The thrill quickly faded as he realized that he would end up leaving his friends, Robert and Vicki, behind. He had never been able to form social connections easily, but Robert and Vicki had always been alongside him.

He sat down on the left side of the living-room couch, feeling upset.

At first, he had talked to them constantly, and it seemed like he had never left home. Over time, their communication became more distant. Tristan deeply worried that they were forgetting about him; worse...they might actually be glad to be rid of him. He knew he could be difficult to deal with at times.

In the three months of living here, he has yet to make a single friend in New York. He hated the crowds, hated the lack of space, but hoped it would at least mean that he could make friends...perhaps even a romantic relationship. So far, though, he had been completely unsuccessful.

However, he had managed to paint a giant target on his back for the bullies at school.

He hadn't mentioned any of it to his parents. While being bullied was nothing new for Tristan, he at least had his friends beside him in the past. His parents...they loved him, he knew, but they had a lot of difficulty understanding him. To both of them, being happy and

making friends was something that came natural to them. Neither of them could understand why Tristan had so much difficulty, and sometimes told him that he wasn't trying hard enough.

Whenever he complained about it, he was told: "Just think positive!"; "Just be happy!"; "Put yourself out there and meet people!" None of it was in the least helpful, so recently he'd just been keeping his mouth shut.

Tristan looked down at his cell phone; 12:17pm. "Really ought to get to bed," he groaned.

His thoughts wouldn't let him rest, though. He was slowly falling into a depressive spiral, asking himself what more he could do to make friends. He thought he was making the right moves, but clearly they disagreed. The one bit of good news he had since moving to a new school was that his grades were doing well, a mixture of As and Bs. His only C was in English, as he had difficulty understanding the symbolism.

He felt tired and wanted to sleep, but his brain still wouldn't cooperate with him.

Still trying to keep from waking anyone else, he walked over to the kitchen to prepare his lunch for tomorrow.

"Well, technically, today," Tristan mumbled.

He did his best to choose healthy, yet filling foods. It would get him through the day...assuming someone didn't throw his lunch in the toilet, something that was becoming a regular occurrence.

"Bunch of cowards," Tristan snarled to himself.

He might have been fat, but he was still strong and those who tormented him were not willing to do so alone. He'd love nothing more than to find one of them alone and break every bone in...*violence is wrong*.

He felt more resigned than anything else. Since his home-schooling had ended, his parents taught him to simply ignore them, that in fighting back, he would be reducing himself to their level. It clearly

didn't work.

He didn't dare turn on any of the lights, so he was unable to at least entertain himself with one of the history books on the shelves. His computer was very tempting, though Tristan was well aware that he would be up all night if he turned it on.

Maybe a walk would do me some good, he thought while rubbing his eyes. He was concerned about walking around in the city at night, even if they lived in a mostly decent neighborhood. Still, he couldn't spend his entire life living in fear. What's the worst that could happen?

Before leaving, Tristan made sure to have his house key, his phone, and a small amount of money in case he was inclined to buy anything. It was the city that never slept, after all.

It was around 40 degrees outside, but Tristan didn't so much as shiver, despite wearing only a t-shirt and shorts. Cold rarely fazed him, except on the worst days in Maine. His classmates frequently looked at him like he was insane. On one occasion, his parents had been accused of neglecting him because he rarely brought a coat to school until at least December...and at times not even then.

Although it was midnight, he was far from the only one out walking, but everyone was simply minding their own business. It was yet another act that he had been forced to become accustomed to in the big city; he couldn't greet everyone. Back where he lived, if someone walked by and ignored you, they were frequently considered rude. Here, there was no way to say hello to them all, especially during rush-hour.

However bad an idea it might have been, at least considering his dire need of sleep, he stopped by a nearby convenience store and bought himself a soda.

He leaned against the small, stone, wall of the store as he popped open the drink. The lights shined through the window, illuminating him and a few other strangers. *They're not judging you...they're not judging you*, Tristan repeated to himself over and over again. He'd had enough comments about his weight that whenever he indulged, it

seemed as if bystanders were looking down his nose at him. It wasn't true, at least most of the time, but the perception was there.

He shivered; he knew it wasn't a good idea to stay outside for too long. Even now, it was far too easy for him to get lost in the neighborhood, especially at night. Unlike his sister, Tristan rarely wandered outside the house, or even his room, thus had less opportunity to explore.

To his right, he saw a homeless man sleeping on a bench. Even in a middle-class neighborhood, they were a common sight. Had it been the daytime, Tristan would have slipped him a couple bucks. As it stood now, he looked at him with a mixture of wariness and pity.

From where he stood, he could hear the roars of the crowds on the streets of Manhattan. Speaking of Manhattan, the skyscrapers towered his neighborhood, even though they were decently far.

He continued his walk throughout the neighborhood. Block after block. Getting more confused as the night got darker.

Nearly 1:00. *I definitely need to get to sleep.* Tristan checked his watch and quickened his pace. Was it just him or were things beginning to look...different? He attributed it merely to his growing weariness.

This was definitely not something he could tell either of his parents about. From the very first day they moved, both warned him not to wander around on his own at night. Considering he would be 18 years old in January (in 3 months), there was a part of Tristan that resented the warning. At the same time...New York City was very different from the part of town he grew up in. Just the neighborhood alone probably had over triple the people, let alone the city as a whole.

He took a giant gulp of his soda and sighed. Caffeine wasn't the best thing for him right now, but he was severely on edge. Tristan reminded himself not to look like an easy target to anyone looking for victims on the street. He'd already had to deal with too much of that at school.

"Two more years and I'll finally be out of there." Tristan rubbed his

eyes in exhaustion.

Admittedly, his family was probably just nervous about the recent murders. The odds of him being a victim were extremely low, but it worried him anyway.

Two weeks; six victims so far...that they know of, at least. All of them children, ranging from a 5-year-old to a 16-year-old. The most recent one being two days ago; the 16-year-old.

What really scared him was the fact that all the bodies were extremely mutilated, almost as if they were literally ripped to shreds. Tristan couldn't think, or believe, of any serial killer that would behave like that.

Ok, this is the way home, right? He asked himself while entering a new block.

He stood under a street sign that read "Hamlet Street". He's made it back home safe and sound. Well, the street at least.

The street had only one streetlight, which was blinking orange light. And Tristan saw, whenever the light blinked bright enough for a few seconds, the picket fence of his home. It was a sight for sore eyes.

But he also saw something catching his attention. There was a drooped paper attached to the streetlight. He found himself to be almost drawn to it, and as he walked closer, he realized it was a "Missing" flier.

"Another one..." Tristan sighed. For these fliers had literally been posted all around the neighborhood. Along with the six murdered children, there were others, adults even, that had simply disappeared without a trace. This poster was likely another one.

I don't remember seeing this when I left home, he thought.

He lifted the drooped part of the flier and held it in place with his left hand. He took a sip of his soda as he read the flier, which was hard from the constantly blinking light just above him.

His head spun when he read the poster, causing him to spit his soda

all over the paper and pole. He only read it in small bursts because of the flickering light.

"Missing: Tristan Harris. Age 17. Last seen: October 16."

"Shit!" Tristan swore, tearing the poster down and dropping it onto the sidewalk.

Was he delusional? *That couldn't be real! Probably just some stupid prank*, Tristan tried to convince himself. *But from who?*

Then he noticed something. The flickering orange light was no more. Like the power went out.

He raised his head up to see that he wasn't even in his street anymore, or even in his neighborhood. Instead, Tristan found himself standing about 10 feet away from a pond, surrounded by thick grass and weeds, enclosed by slender trees. He bit his lip to keep from crying out. He saw the skyscrapers of Manhattan completely tower over him, now. *Am I in Central Park?* It sure didn't sound like it. He heard the sounds of Manhattan all the way from his neighborhood (crowds of people, honking cars, concerts, parties, etc), so why didn't he hear them now?

"This can't be real," Tristan tried to reassure himself.

"What can't be real, Tristy?" He heard a voice call out to him.

Tristan turned around, his heart pounding, trying to locate the voice. He was just tired after a long day, that's it. That was the only logical explanation for all this. Either that, or he's dreaming.

He moved back from the pond as quickly as he could. Tristan had numerous fears, but his fear of drowning was by far the greatest.

When he was eight years old, during a party, the neighborhood teenagers threw him into their swimming pool as a joke, despite knowing that he was unable to swim. Tristan had splashed and struggled, swallowing gulps of water, before, finally, managing to crawl out, crying and shaking. The neighbors howled with laughter as he ran home, bawling for his parents.

Since then, he had been nervous even being near a swimming pool. When his father had signed him up for swimming lessons, he was unable to enter water deeper than his stomach, despite being the oldest of the boys. No matter how much the instructor tried to encourage him, Tristan absolutely refused. He had always avoided bodies of water, terrified that it would happen again. He had made efforts to overcome his fear over the years, but it had never done any good. That's one of the major reasons he hated New York City; it was surrounded by water.

This...this could not be possible! I was just standing in a neighborhood! How could I be standing in front of a...pond? Tristan had no idea what was going on, but had no intentions of finding out.

"**Leaving so soon, boy?**" The voice spoke to him again. Tristan was now close to hyperventilating.

"Where the hell are you, and what do you want?!" Tristan demanded, attempting to sound brave...and failing badly.

"Right here!"

Tristan threw his head around in the direction of the pond to see a figure appear on the other side of it. And as his eyes squinted to get a better look, he realized he was staring at a clown. It was hard to see through the vegetation of the bushes and ferns, but it didn't look like anyone he'd ever met. But it knew his name. Maybe it knew his fear of drowning? However insane he might have sounded, Tristan doubted it was even human at all.

The only thing he knew for sure was that the clown was dangerous, and the grin he wore boded nothing good. He backed away, looking for an escape route.

"What do you want from me?" Tristan glared.

His only chance, he knew, was to run, run at full speed in the opposite direction. He didn't know how to fight, and doubted it would do him any good even if he did. Run and flee was his only option.

Yet his legs refused to obey him. In fact, at the moment, they were barely able to support his weight.

"That's rude. We haven't even introduced ourselves yet!" The clown chuckled, stepping out of the dark trees, shined on by the moonlight.

"I'm Pennywise the Dancing Clown. Good to make your acquaintance, Tristy."

"I don't care who you are!" Tristan exclaimed.

"I don't want anything to do with you!" He dropped his soda in panic, searching his pocket for something to defend himself with, anything...there was nothing.

"That's rude of you, Tristy," Pennywise smiled.

"We all float down here...and you will too!" The clown cheered.

And with that said, unbelievably, bodies had rose to the top of the pond. Dead...human...bodies.

Tristan's legs regained some of their strength and he turned around to run, only to see over a dozen other figures around him. In his panic, it took several moments to recognize them. They were children. Although they were mostly covered in darkness, Tristan saw that all of them had pieces missing; one of the girls had her jaw torn off, but she was still able to speak.

"You'll float too!" she giggled, waving at him. Tristan quickly found himself trapped between...*Pennywise*...and...whoever *they* happened to be.

"You'll float too!" The youngest of them proclaimed. He couldn't have been older than 6, but looked just as terrifying as the others.

"No, no, this isn't real!" Tristan screamed, falling to the ground. He hurriedly pushed himself to his feet.

"Join us, Tristan," one of the boys asked him with an evil smile. His arms were both missing, with blood still dripping from them. His

clothes had been reduced to a few fragments, blood leaking from his blackened eyes.

Tristan felt something grab him and jumped higher than a young man of his weight should ever have been able to. He began sprinting left, but was not able to get more than a few feet before something grabbed his ankle and sent him down to the ground. The girl with the missing jaw crouched down next to him, looked at him in his watery eyes, and giggled.

After hearing bubbles from the pond, he turned around to see the, once, dead bodies simultaneously come to life. They all began to swim in his direction, with their hands extending out.

Without processing what was going on, he immediately attempted to lift himself up from the floor, shaking the jawless girl off of him. But he was pulled back down roughly. Not from the little girl, or any of the other children. But from a bloody hand that emerged out of the grassy ground.

"You'll float too! You'll float too!" All of the children chanted, Pennywise guiding them as if he was a composer at an orchestra. And, in a way, he was.

As the lifeless bodies made their way to his feet, more hands emerged from the ground, pulling him down. So not only was he forced to stay down on the mud, the dead bodies were pulling him into the pond.

He was pulled in slowly, as if..."It"...was savoring the moment. He steeled himself, tried to make himself heavier, kicked the grasping hands behind him, and whack-a-moled the hands under him...anything to keep from entering the water, but after a while his body was covered in bloody hands; around 20 in total.

With one final shock, Pennywise had appeared out of the group of chanting children, kneeled right in front of Tristan's struggling face, and opened his mouth, revealing hundreds—no, thousands—of rows of teeth.

"AAAHHHHHH!" Tristan bellowed, swinging his fist in Pennywise's direction with his eyes shut.

When that "attack" failed, he continued to struggle through these bloody hands and evil children. He was truly going to die. He hoped, he prayed, for someone to come and save him. His parents, a police officer, a bystander, anyone!

His legs were now drenched in the water.

In sheer desperation, Tristan began biting the hands that wrapped around his neck, for his legs and arms were deemed useless since they were covered in the bloody hands that popped out of the dirt as fast as an ant-hill would when pouring water on it.

He knew he was a goner as the children joined in on the fun and began pulling him in faster. All the while, Pennywise laughed an evil clown laugh as his mouth formed itself back to normal, luckily, closing the void of teeth from Tristan's view.

The bloody hands now released as their job was done (sinking back into the grassy ground), letting the bodies finish their job of dragging Tristan into the pond. They yanked his hair and flesh as his whole body was soaked with water.

His screams were now the sounds of bubbles as he was pulled down, down into the abyss of water.